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Three popular books.

POPULAR interest in plants is being cultivated recently by numerous books of high artistic merit and variable scientific quality. Several of them have been noticed in this journal, and three others now deserve attention, all of which stand high in their class. To interest the public in making intelligent observations is a most commendable purpose, but the temptation to arouse interest by bringing together doubtful facts and legends is very strong, and the effect is sometimes more than doubtful.

*Nature's garden*² is the title selected by Neltje Blanchan (a *nom de plume*, we understand, of Mrs. Doubleday). The book considers flowers from the standpoint of pollination by insects, and the best authors seem to have been consulted. Over five hundred flowers are represented, and are grouped according to color, "because it is believed that the novice, with no knowledge of botany whatever, can most readily identify the specimen found afield by this method, which has the added advantage of being the simpler one adopted by the higher insects ages before books were written." The classification by colors is as follows: blue to purple flowers, magenta to pink flowers, white and greenish flowers, yellow and orange flowers, red and indefinites. The book is on a higher plane than those which merely seek to lead the observer to a name, for the name is only an introduction to some real acquaintance. The illustrations deserve special commendation, for the half tones from photographs and the colored photographs made direct from nature are of exceptional merit. The former bring out details with that exquisite clearness which good photographs can obtain, while the latter represent the best results of color photography, which we must confess is frequently uncertain as yet as to shades. The book appeals to those interested in beautiful illustration, to those desiring a better acquaintance with flowering plants, and to those who are seeking on every hand help in organizing nature study.

ALICE LOUNSBERRY, the author of *A guide to the wild flowers*, has published a companion volume entitled *A guide to the trees*,³ which well sustains the reputation of the former. Nearly two hundred trees are represented, and among them are all those prominent in northeastern America. There is every effort to make determinations easy, by using comparatively few technical terms and by employing the most obvious characters. For example, the

² BLANCHAN, NELTJE : *Nature's garden*, an aid to knowledge of our wild flowers and their insect visitors, with colored plates and many other illustrations photographed directly from nature by Henry Troth and A. R. Dugmore. Large 8vo. pp. xvi + 415. New York : Doubleday, Page & Co. 1900. \$3.00.

³ LOUNSBERRY, ALICE : *A guide to the trees*, with 64 colored and 164 black-and-white plates and 55 diagrams by Mrs. Ellis Rowan, with an introduction by Dr. N. L. Britton. 8vo. pp. xx + 313. New York : Frederick A. Stokes Company. 1900. \$2.50.

primary classification is on the basis of soil, as follows : trees preferring to grow near water (in swamps and by running streams); trees preferring to grow in moist soil (lowlands and meadows); trees preferring to grow in rich soil (forests and thickets); trees preferring to grow in sandy or rocky soil (hillsides and barrens); trees preferring to grow in light or dry soil (upland places, meadows, and roadsides). The arrangement within these five sections is on the basis of leaf characters. The illustrations in color are from originals painted by Mrs. Rowan, and are both artistic and accurate. The pen-and-ink sketches are not so well done, but they are very helpful in determinations.

In the technical description of trees, and in what may be styled the literary appendix to each, the author is on safe ground; but in the pages on "the growth of trees" the statements become ancient in form, vague, and sometimes erroneous. The meaning can be caught by one familiar with the subject, but to the untrained the explanations do not explain.

HARRIET L. KEELER has also written a most attractive book on trees.⁴ It is designed to enable the amateur botanist and the general public to recognize trees and so become interested in them. The book is straightforward and matter-of-fact, and is calculated to develop a rational rather than a sentimental or literary interest in trees. The descriptions are clear and simple, and the accompanying remarks in the main have to do with range, time of blooming, general appearance, notable habits, uses, etc. The illustrations from photographs are as perfect as any we have seen, being exceptionally fine examples of photography and half-tone reproduction. Every detail stands out with the distinctness of the original specimens. The same high commendation cannot be given to the drawings and their reproduction, which are in sharp contrast with the exquisite half tones. As in all such books, one finds a venerable and profuse terminology, which has largely outlived its usefulness.

These books can be commended to the general public and to teachers seeking for suggestions of interesting material.—J. M. C.

MINOR NOTICES.

FASCICLES 195, 196, and 197 of Engler and Prantl's *Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien* have recently appeared. The first contains the completion of the Salviniaceæ and the Marsiliaceæ by R. Sadebeck and the beginning of the Marattiaceæ by G. Bitter. Fascicles 196 and 197, a double number, contain the Sphaeropsidales, Melanconiales, and Hyphomycetes, by G. Lindau.

⁴ KEELER, HARRIET L. : Our native trees, and how to identify them; a popular study of their habits and their peculiarities, with 178 illustrations from photographs and 162 illustrations from drawings. 8vo. pp. xxii + 533. New York : Charles Scribner's Sons. 1900. \$2.00.